PROLOGUE

AND

EPILOGUE,

Spoken at the Opening of the

THEATRE

IN

DRURY-LANE 1747.

LONDON:

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PROLOGUE

SPOKEN BY

Mr. GARRICK.

WHEN Learning's Triumph o'er her barb'rous Foes
First rear'd the Stage, immortal SHAKESPEAR rose;
Each Change of many-colour'd Life he drew,
Exhausted Worlds, and then imagin'd new:
Existence saw him spurn her bounded Reign,
And panting Time toil'd after him in vain:
His pow'rful Strokes presiding Truth impress'd,
And unresisted Passion storm'd the Breast.

Then JOHNSON came, instructed from the School,
To please in Method, and invent by Rule;
His studious Patience, and laborious Art,
By regular Approach essay'd the Heart;
Cold Approbation gave the ling'ring Bays,
For those who durst not censure, scarce cou'd praise.
A Mortal born he met the general Doom,
But left, like *Egypt*'s Kings, a lasting Tomb.

The Wits of *Charles* found easier Ways to Fame,
Nor wish'd for JOHNSON's Art, or SHAKESPEAR's Flame,
Themselves they studied, as they felt, they writ,
Intrigue was Plot, Obscenity was Wit.
Vice always found a sympathetick Friend;
They pleas'd their Age, and did not aim to mend.
Yet Bards like these aspir'd to lasting Praise,
And proudly hop'd to pimp in future Days.
Their Cause was gen'ral, their Supports were strong,
Their Slaves were willing, and their Reign was long;
Till Shame regain'd the Post that Sense betray'd,
And Virtue call'd Oblivion to her Aid.

Then

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Then crush'd by Rules, and weaken'd as refin'd,
For Years the Pow'r of Tragedy declin'd;
From Bard, to Bard, the frigid Caution crept,
Till Declamation roar'd, while Paſſion ſlept.
Yet ſtill did Virtue deign the Stage to tread,
Philoſophy remain'd, though Nature fled.
But forc'd at length her antient Reign to quit,
She ſaw great *Fauſtus* lay the Ghoſt of Wit:
Exulting Folly hail'd the joyful Day,
And Pantomime, and Song, confirm'd her Sway.
But who the coming Changes can preſage,
And mark the future Periods of the Stage?—
Perhaps if Skill could diſtant Times explore,
New *Behns*, new *Durfeys*, yet remain in Store.
Perhaps, where *Lear* has rav'd, and *Hamlet* dy'd,
On flying Cars new Sorcerers may ride.
Perhaps, for who can gueſs th' Effects of Chance?
Here *Hunt* may box, or *Mahomet* may dance.
Hard is his Lot, that here by Fortune plac'd,
Muſt watch the wild Viciſſitudes of Taſte;
With ev'ry Meteor of Caprice muſt play,
And chaſe the new-blown Bubbles of the Day.
Ah! let not Cenſure term our Fate our Choice,
The Stage but echoes back the publick Voice.
The Drama's Laws the Drama's Patrons give,
For we that live to pleaſe, muſt pleaſe to live.
Then prompt no more the Follies you decry,
As Tyrants doom their Tools of Guilt to die;
'Tis yours this Night to bid the Reign commence
Of reſcu'd Nature, and reviving Senſe;
To chaſe the Charms of Sound, the Pomp of Show,
For uſeful Mirth, and ſalutary Woe;
Bid ſcenic Virtue form the riſing Age,
And Truth diffuſe her Radiance from the Stage.

EPILOGUE Spoken by Mrs. WOFFINGTON,

SWEET Doings truly! we are finely fobb'd!
And at one Stroke of all our Pleaſures robb'd!
No Beaux behind the Scenes!—'tis Innovation!
Under the ſpecious Name of Reformation!
Public Complaint, forſooth, is made the Puff,
Senſe, Order, Decency, and ſuch like Stuff.

But Arguments like these are meer Pretence,
The *Beaux*, 'tis known, ne'er give the least Offence,
Are Men of chasteſt Conduct, and amazing Senſe!
Each Actreſs now a lock'd up Nun muſt be,
And prieſtly Managers muſt keep the Key.
I know their ſelfiſh Reaſons; tho' they tell us,
While Smarts, and Wits, and other pretty Fellows,
Murmur their Paſſions to our flutt'ring Hearts,
The Stage ſtands ſtill, and we neglect our Parts.
But how miſtaken in this ſilly Notion!
We hear 'em talk without the leaſt Emotion.
Juſt, as our Tea, we ſip each tender Strain,
Too weak to warm the Heart, or reach the Brain.
If harmleſs, why are we debarr'd our Rights?
Damſels diſtreſs'd have ever found their Knights.
Shall we, the *Dulcineas* of the Stage,
In vain aſk Succour in this fighting Age?
Will you choice Spirits, who direct the Town,
Suffer ſuch Impoſitions to go down?
Can it be thought this Law will ever paſs,
While Doors are only Wood, and Windows Glaſs?
Beſides, our Play-Houſe Guards are paſſive Men:
Strike without fear; they muſt not ſtrike again.
Ev'n *Fribble* here, to draw his Sword may venture,
May *cuſe the Creters*, beat his Man, and enter——
The jealous *Moor* not roars in louder Strains,
Than all our Nymphs for loſs of abſent Swains—
" We had been happy, though the Houſe had fail'd,
" Maſters and all, had not his Scheme prevail'd.
" For ever now farewell the plumed Beaux,
" Who make Ambition—to conſiſt in Cloaths.
" Farewel Coquettry, and all Green-room Joys,
" Ear-thrilling Whiſpers, *Deard*'s deluding Toys,
" Soul melting Flatt'ry, which ev'n Prudes can move,
" Sighs——Tears——and all the Circumſtance of Love,
" Farewell!——
" But Oh! ye dreadful Criticks, whoſe rude Throats
" Can make both Play'rs and Maſters change their Notes,
" 'Tis in your Pow'r---you any Lengths will run,
" Help us; or elſe---our *Occupation*'s gone.

F I N I S.

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